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## SUDAN

# Darfur crisis: What are we waiting for?

BY TOM LANTOS

**W**hat is keeping the international community from intervening meaningfully in the Darfur crisis? I hesitate to ask, because I hate to think that the answer is the same double-standard that stayed our hand in Rwanda in the 1990s.

More than two million innocent and impoverished civilians in Darfur have fled their homes to internal camps and neighboring Chad, and an estimated 300,000 have died from government-sponsored violence, disease and starvation because of the war. Their only crime is their identity. The empty threats of sanctions that never get imposed have done little to end the atrocities. Dictators around the globe will indeed see the inaction in Darfur as a blank check for genocide.

In late November, the U.N. Security Council only made matters worse by adopting a Bush Administration resolution that rewards Khartoum with debt relief and development assistance, irrespective of what happens in Darfur. These incentives were part of the negotiating process to get Sudan's government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to end a bitter, 30-year civil war. But the delivery of such benefits should be put on hold as long as Khartoum is engaged in atrocities. If anyone needs special economic assistance, it is the victims of Khartoum's aggression.

Whether you call the situation genocide, as the U.S. government finally did in September, or ethnic cleansing, as some of our European allies would have it, the facts remain: Thousands continue to die, are being raped, tortured, killed and displaced because of their identity. It is imperative that the world community act.

The recently deployed 3,500 African Union (AU) troops had their mandate expanded this month to include protecting civilians whom they

observe to be under imminent threat. But they have neither the resources nor the capability to do justice to the job. Incredibly, the protocol that expanded the AU's mandate still leaves Khartoum in charge of protecting the civilian population. A few days ago, the Arab militias brazenly killed civilians right in front of AU monitors. With the situation deteriorating daily, it is clear that the AU forces are inadequate and lack the command and control capacity to affect this crisis. In order to stop this genocide, we need an international effort led by the Africans, but it cannot be an African effort alone.

The complex crisis in Darfur requires a much more robust response. While I believe strongly that the African Union should continue to have a prominent presence in Darfur, it is clear that the AU cannot undertake this operation by itself. The only course of action left is a strong civilian-protection mandate from the United Nations led by the current AU mission and enforced by NATO-led civilian protection troops.

It is imperative that we bring the most capable forces in the world to stop this genocide. We know that the international community is up to the task: During the crisis in Kosovo, the Security Council established the internationally led Kosovo Force in the face of a similar humanitarian crisis that resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 Kosovar Albanians and forced 400,000 people from their homes. We in the international community were gravely concerned over the loss of life and mass displacement of people then and chose to act. We can do nothing less for the innocent civilians in Darfur.

I urge the immediate preparation and deployment of a NATO-led protection force to begin safeguarding Darfur's civilian population as was done in Kosovo. Their aim should be to protect civilians in camps, secure the camp environments, secure safe corridors for humanitarian convoys, provide safe passage for civilians trapped in rural areas beyond humanitarian access, provide security for those returning to their villages and disarming the Arab militias. Military experts have estimated that these tasks will require 40,000 to 50,000 well-trained and equipped troops. If we in the international community are serious about stopping this genocide, that is what we will do. Otherwise, we have cause to wonder what exactly we harbor in our hearts toward the people of Darfur.

U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) is the ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee and co-chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

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